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Ovid in the *Mahābhārata*. Some cases and methodological reflections.

In his study of *Motifs in Indian Mythology*. U. P. Arora in 1981 concluded: *In perusing the myths and legends of the old cultures, one finds that the largest number of parallels to Indian legends are supplied by Greece. So far the present study is concerned, barring a few, each Indian legend taken up is either almost wholly paralleled by some Greek story or at least contains certain similar motifs.* In his epoch-making *History of the Indian Literature*, M. Winternitz denied direct connections between Greco-Roman and Indian literatures: *It can in no case be proved that any Greek fiction whatsoever had come into India or an Indian fiction had reached Greece,* finishing, in a sense, a long debate on possible mutual influences. The question is: Which are the criteria for discriminating between oral contact and direct uses of literary sources?

In previous publications I have advocated the direct use of Greco-Roman materials by the *Mahābhārata's* authors. In my paper I argue that the direct use of Greco-Roman literary tradition in the *Mahābhārata* can be found in several of the Ovidian stories collected by Arora too, as well as in other Ovidian stories used by the *Mahābhārata's* authors. I also propose that the comparison of these uses let us discover the method employed by the *Mahābhārata's* authors to deal with these materials, which components of the stories –in a sense, of the Greco-Roman culture- attracted them, and how they could work these stories to create new meanings in the context of a work of undisputed genius and focused in their own culture and in their own ideological, artistic, and political aims. This paper connects with the hypothesis defended by several authors as Alf Hiltebeitel on a *Mahābhārata* creation by an author or team in a relatively short period of time.